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Message Text

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USICA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS:
SUBJECT: VISIT OF VOA DIRECTOR AND MRS. R. PETER STRAUS

REF: USICA 16167

1. DIRECTOR AND MRS. PETER STRAUS VISITED BUDAPEST JUL 18-21. DURING THAT PERIOD MR. AND MRS. STRAUS MADE COURTESY CALLS ON THE CHIEF OF THE PRESS DEPARTMENT OF THE MFA, DR. REZSO BANYASZ AND CHIEF OF MFA'S DEPARTMENT NO. 5, AMBASSADOR JANOS BARTHA. SUBSTANTIVE APPOINTMENTS WERE ARRANGED WITH THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF HUNGARIAN TELEVISOION GYORGY MARVANYI, CHIEF TV COMMENTATOR PAL IPPER, THE DEPUTY EDITOR IN CHIEF OF NEPSZABADSAG, PETER RENYI, AND THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF HUNGARIAN RADIO DR. KALMAN KISS AND MRS. AGNES SCOTT, CHIEF OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SECTION OF HUNGARIAN RADIO. IN ADDITION, THE PAO HELD A RECEPTION FOR MR. AND MRS. STRAUS TO WHICH HUNGARIAN MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES WERE INVITED.

2. DURING THE CALLS ON HUNGARIANS AS WELL AS DURING DISCUSSIONS WITH THEM DURING SOCIAL OCCASIONS, THEY EMPHASIZED TIME AND AGAIN THEIR CONCERN ABOUT THE APPARENTLY DETERIORATING U.S.-USSR RELATIONS AND THE EFFECT THOSE WORSENING RELATIONS WILL HAVE ON DETENTE.
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THEIR MOST OBVIOUS WORRY IS THAT HUNGARY WILL BE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED SHOULD A SERIOUS STRAIN IN U. S.-USSR RELATIONS TAKE PLACE, THAT HUNGARY WILL HAVE TO RETRENCH, AND IN THE PROCESS THEY WILL LOSE MUCH OF THE LIBERALIZATION ALREADY ACHIEVED. THIS CONCERN CAME TO THE FOREGROUND PARTICULARLY DURING THE TWO-HOUR VISIT WITH BENYI, WHICH RANGED FROM BILATERAL RELATIONS TO EAST-WEST ISSUES, VOA, AS WELL AS PRACTICAL SUBJECTS RELATING TO THE DAILY OPERATION OF THE

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NEWSPAPER. RENYI SAID THAT HE DOES NOT LISTEN TO VOA BUT THAT HE RECEIVES DAILY SUMMARY OF THE NEWS WESTERN RADIO HEADLINES. HE HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT CERTAIN VOA PROGRAMS AND CLAIMED THAT AT TIMES VOA WAS TOO AGGRESSIVE, BUT GAVE NO DETAILS. HE ENDED THE VISIT BY SAYING THAT IF SOMEONE HAD SAID TWENTY YEARS AGO THAT ONE DAY THE DIRECTOR OF THE VOA WOULD BE SITTING IN HIS OFFICE AT NEPSAZABADSAG, THE PARTY PAPER, HE WOULD HAVE BELIEVED THAT PERSON TO BE TOTALLY UNSTABLE.

3. DURING THE VISIT TO KISS AT HUNGARIAN RADIO MR. STRAUS INVITED HUNGARIAN RADIO JOURNALISTS TO USE VOA FACILITIES AND SUGGESTED AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE TWO STATIONS. KISS WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE OFFER OF VOA FACILITIES AND BELIEVED THAT AN EXCHANGE ON A RECIPROCAL BASIS WAS FEASIBLE.

4. THE POST BELIEVES THAT VOA DIRECTOR STRAUS' VISIT TO HUNGARY CAME AT A MOST OPPORTUNE TIME. DURING RECENT MONTHS WE HAVE TRIED TO DEMONSTRATE TO HUNGARIANS THAT VOA IS A RESPONSIBLE INTERNATIONAL RADIO OPERATION. THERE HAVE BEEN TWO HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE CORESPONDENTS HERE FROM VOA DURING THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS, AND IN BOTH CASES THERE WAS RESISTANCE IN SCHEDULING THEM HERE. ALTHOUGH WE EXPECT THAT FUTURE VISITS BY VOA HUNGARIAN LANGUATE CORRESPONDENTS MIGHT CONTINUE TO PRESENT SOME PROBLEMS TO THE HUNGARIANS, THE VISIT OF THE VOA DIRECTOR SHOULD HAVE A POSITIVE EFFECT ON THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE VOICE OF AMERICA AND ITS BROADCAST POLICY.
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